

Improving Transition Outcomes

An Innovative State Alignment Grant for Improving Transition Outcomes
for Youth with Disabilities Through the Use of Intermediaries

West Sioux CASE Presentation

Improving Transition Outcomes with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Governance Group partners Department for the Blind, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Division of Persons with Disabilities, Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council, and Workforce Development, proudly announces that West Sioux Community School Career & Self Exploration (CASE) will present at the "A Thousand Roads" 2006 Transition-Parent Educator Connection Conference on Monday, February 27, 2006. Principal Kim Buryanek and CASE teacher Arlys Cauwels will conduct the presentation.

The West Sioux CASE Prototype is one of three community demonstrations implementing strategies to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities ages 14-24. Each prototype tests, adjusts and perfects strategies to meet the needs of youth, families, educators, employers and the larger community. Preparation for, securing and maintaining employment are among the prototype outcome measures.

Vocational exploration is a critical CASE component. Youth participating in the West Sioux CASE class increase their self-awareness as they identify their vocational interests and strengths. The youth also gain entrepreneurship experience by running "Falcon Joe," an in-school coffee shop.

This is the second year for the coffee shop and not only are the youth increasing their knowledge of the working world but they are also gaining valuable leadership skills. Twenty eight members of the local "Red Hat Society" recently met at Falcon Joe's and two youth shared with them the value of the CASE curriculum and the hands-on coffee shop experience.

Melanie Pottebaum of Hope Haven, Inc. adapted an existing Boston University model for increasing self-awareness and applied it as a process of career planning for use with high



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school youth. Pottebaum equips teachers to successfully incorporate the CASE curriculum using the “Train the Trainer” model. As the teachers learn how to implement the CASE curriculum, Pottebaum’s interaction decreases to consultation as needed.

The first year Pottebaum worked one-on-one with the youth and the teachers to complete the “Assessing & Choosing” portions of the curriculum. This year teacher Arlys Cauwels is teaching the “Assessing & Choosing” portions while Pottebaum follows up with the youth from last year on the “Achieving” portion of the curriculum.

These first two years CASE students have been high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. Educators, youth and parents have equally praised the CASE curriculum for stimulating youth to explore vocational possibilities after high school. In fact, West Sioux community members have asked that the curriculum and entrepreneurship experience be opened up to all students. In the future, West Sioux plans to offer CASE as an elective and give priority status to youth with disabilities should enrollment exceed capacity. Thus, youth with disabilities would experience an advantage versus a stigma!

The West Sioux Board of Education has been very supportive of CASE. Board members attended Falcon Joe’s grand opening in March 2005 and receive regular updates on CASE activities and progress. The West Sioux Board of Education fosters a culture of innovation that promotes activities and projects such as CASE. West Sioux administrators and teachers are supported by West Sioux Board members as they implement programs that yield a positive impact on student achievement.

The community consortium that spearheaded CASE development and implementation meets on a regular basis to problem-solve as needed and brainstorm sustainability. These community partners include: youth with disabilities and family members, Area Education Agency 4, Hawarden Area Partnership for Progress, Hope Haven, Inc., Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the local Transition Advisory Board, West Sioux Community School, and Workforce Development.

CASE is offered through the State of Iowa Improving Transition Outcomes grant project administered by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services with funding through the US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. Prototype replication is encouraged and tools to assist with replication are under production.

